

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**AT**

**THE OLD RECTORY,**

**EASINGTON,**

**OXFORDSHIRE**

**NGR SU 6618 9708**

*On behalf of*

*JPPC*

**JULY 2014**

**REPORT FOR** JPPC  
Bagley Croft  
Hinksey Hill  
Oxford  
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**CONTENTS**

|  | <b>Page</b> |
|--|-------------|
| <b><i>SUMMARY</i></b>                            | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>                            | <b>1</b>    |
| 1.1 Site Location                                | 1           |
| 1.2 Planning Background                          | 1           |
| 1.3 Archaeological Background                    | 1           |
| <b>2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION</b>               | <b>1</b>    |
| <b>3 STRATEGY</b>                                | <b>3</b>    |
| 3.1 Research Design                              | 3           |
| 3.2 Methodology                                  | 3           |
| <b>4 RESULTS</b>                                 | <b>4</b>    |
| 4.1 Excavation Results                           | 4           |
| 4.2 The Rectory House                            | 8           |
| 4.3 Reliability of Results and Techniques        | 9           |
| <b>5 FINDS</b>                                   | <b>9</b>    |
| 5.1 Pottery                                      | 9           |
| 5.2 Ceramic Building Material                    | 10          |
| 5.3 Animal Bone                                  | 10          |
| <b>6 DISCUSSION</b>                              | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>7 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>                            | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>APPENDIX Archaeological Context Inventory</b> | <b>9</b>    |
| <b>FIGURES</b>                                   |             |
| <b>Figure 1</b> Site location                    | 2           |
| <b>Figure 2</b> Trenches 1&2 Plans and sections  | 6           |
| <b>Figure 3</b> Photographs                      | 10          |
| <b>PLATES</b>                                    |             |
| <b>Plate 1</b> View to west along Trench 1       | 4           |
| <b>Plate 2</b> Masonry footings in Trench 1      | 4           |

|                |                                   |   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Plate 3</b> | View of the possible well         | 5 |
| <b>Plate 4</b> | View to south across Trench 2     | 7 |
| <b>Plate 5</b> | Modern Pit                        | 7 |
| <b>Plate 6</b> | The 19 <sup>th</sup> Century path | 8 |

## **Summary**

*John Moore Heritage Services carried out an archaeological evaluation of this site on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014. Two 15m long trenches were machine excavated to the natural geology. Two archaeological features were identified to the north of the house and associated modern features were discovered to the east.*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The site of the proposed development is located within the centre of the village of Easington, to the north of St Peter's Church (SU 6618 9708). The site lies at approximately 90m OD and the geology is Chalk on the edge of Gault Clay Deposits. The site is currently under residential use.

### **1.2 Planning Background**

Planning permission has been granted by South Oxfordshire District Council for the demolition of the current building and the erection of a new dwelling and garage (P14/S0682/FUL). Due to the potential disturbance of below ground archaeological features a condition of permission required a programme of archaeological investigation to be carried out. Due to the archaeological potential of the site an archaeological field evaluation was carried out as a first stage to this requirement. Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) produced a Design Brief for the field evaluation and a *Written Scheme of Investigation* outlined the methods by which the work would be carried out in order to achieve the aims of the evaluation brief.

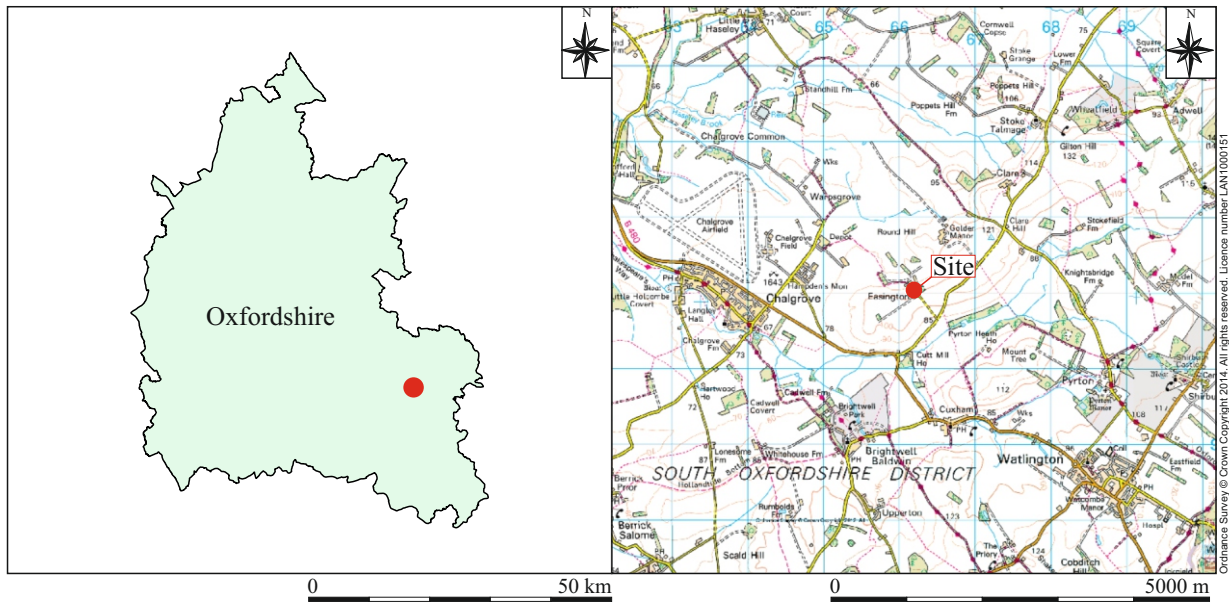
### **1.3 Archaeological Background**

The site is located in an area of archaeological potential within the historic core of the settlement of Easington and immediately north of the early 14<sup>th</sup> century church (County Historic Environment Record PRN 3957). There is a church mentioned in Easington c. 1150AD and there was potential for it being located on the site of the proposed works. The medieval Rectory House was also mentioned in 1150AD as being next to the church and there was further potential that it could also be located in the area of the current rectory within the application area. The early 16th century manor house is located 40m north east of the proposal site (PRN 21355).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

The aims of the investigation as laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.



Key  Site boundary  Evaluation trenches  Archaeological features

Figure 1: Site location

- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of the archaeological features and deposits.
- In particular to establish if features related to the medieval settlement were present.
- To determine the impact of the proposed development on any remains present.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation.
- To inform the need for, and scope of, further phases of work to mitigate the impact of the development.

### **3 STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS). Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and section drawings compiled where appropriate and possible.

The recording was carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

#### **3.2 Methodology**

The field evaluation comprised of the mechanical excavation of two trenches, each 15m long and 1.6m wide (see plan). Excavation was by a 7.5 tonne excavator equipped with a ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation was used to remove topsoil and overburden to the uppermost archaeological horizon or geological horizon under direct archaeological supervision. The machine excavation was used only for the removal of non-archaeologically significant material. The resulting surfaces were cleaned and excavated by hand where appropriate to achieve the objectives of the investigation.

Standard John Moore Heritage Services techniques were employed throughout, involving the completion of a written record for each deposit encountered, with scale plans and sections drawings compiled where appropriate. A photographic record was produced.

Richard Oram of Oxfordshire County Archaeological Services (OCAS) monitored the work.

## 4 RESULTS (Figure 2)

All features were assigned individual context numbers. These numbers covered both the feature cuts and the fills for a wall, large pit, a path and a dump of aggregate type material, all of which were excavated by hand. A particularly modern pit was excavated by machine. Context numbers in ( ) show feature fills or deposits of material.

### 4.1 Excavation Results

#### Trench 1 (Plate 1)

The natural geological deposit in the area was a compacted, light grey Gault Clay (1/02). Above the natural was a moderately compacted garden soil consisting of brownish grey silty, sandy clay with abundant, small roughly hewn limestone pieces, gravel and occasional garden rubbish such as brick, concrete rubble and tile fragments (1/01). Initial inspection showed much of this upper surface in the area had been recently disturbed by modern machinery.



*Plate 1 - View to west along Trench 1*



*Plate 2 - Masonry footings in Trench 1*

Cut into the natural geological deposit at the very eastern end of the trench was a masonry footing (Plate 2). The entire footings were not fully exposed within this trench, only what appeared to be the corner of a possible larger structure. The cut 1/03 was 0.23m into the natural and filled by large, irregular limestone blocks approximately 200mm x 170mm x 25mm in size, tightly packed but with no visible signs of bonding mortar (1/04).



Approximately 7.00m from the eastern end of the trench a concentration of moderately compacted coarse aggregate and loose limestone blocks was identified, covering an area of a further 6.00m towards the western end of the trench. This seemed to be at its most dense at the area shown in plan (1/05) and may have formed a modern pathway down from the house or simply have been the remains of a pile of dumped aggregate.

Below this layer a large pit or well-like feature was identified, cut into the natural at the western part of the trench (*Plate 3*). The visible feature was 50% excavated to a depth of 1.00m from the top of the geological horizon. At the surface the cut 1/06 measured 3.60m wide and gradually tapered down with a shallow slope, forming a weather cone to a steep sided pit with a diameter of 1.57m.



*Plate 3 – View of the possible well*

The upper fill of this feature (1/07) was a compact grey sandy clay, extending across the entire top of the feature to a depth of 0.30m. The fill contained a small amount of broken tile and animal bone.

Below this layer an earlier fill was identified (1/08), infilling the pit to an excavation depth of 1.00m. This fill comprised of a grey, compact clay with rare inclusions of small stones and some charcoal flecking. The fill contained a small amount of broken tile, animal bone and pottery fragments.

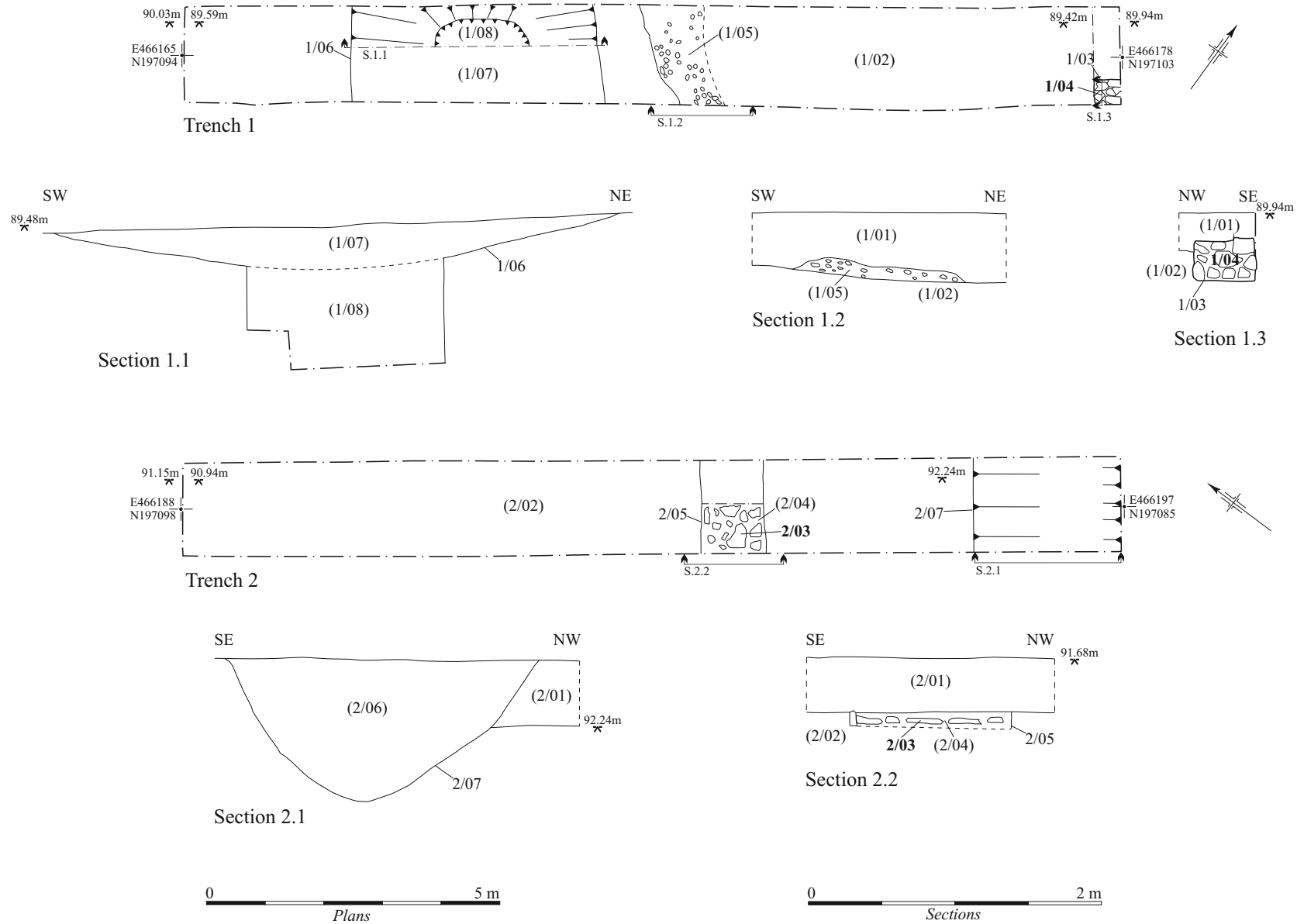


Figure 2: Trenches 1 and 2 - plans and sections

**Trench 2** (*Plate 4*)

The natural geological deposit in this trench was the same as in Trench 1 comprising a compacted light grey Gault Clay (2/02). Overlaying the geology was a similar topsoil layer to trench one which consisted of a less disturbed dark grey, silty clay garden soil with brick and tile rubble inclusions (2/01). Two features were discovered within this trench.



*Plate 4 – View to south across Trench 2*

At the very northern end of this trench a 2.50m wide large modern pit 2/07 had been dug through the topsoil layer into the natural to a depth of 0.97m (*Plate 5*). This pit was excavated by machine and shown to contain large burnt tree branches, charcoal, leaves, steel wire and brick and tile rubble (2/06).



*Plate 5 – Modern Pit*

Located 3.50m north of this intervention was a small east-west aligned garden path comprised of a 1.10m wide x 0.10m deep cut running the full width of the trench (*Plate 6*). This was filled by deliberately lain large, flat limestone blocks with no mortar (2/03). A loose, friable garden soil had formed over these stones and glass and porcelain pottery pieces were recovered from this fill (2/04). The cut for the path was numbered 2/05.



*Plate 6 – The 19<sup>th</sup> Century path*

#### **4.2 The Rectory House** *by Dr Stephen Yeates*

A cursory examination of the existing building was undertaken by Dr Yeates.

Easington Rectory is a structure with at least a probable 18<sup>th</sup> date, and with other features that could be dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The house is located in a terrace cut into a north facing bank. The structure externally appears to be a mixture of stone rubble and brick. The roof is of red clay tile.

The front elevation contains three bays and is composed of brick, which from internal and external observations is probably a later frontage clad to a stone structure. The central bay contains a door on the ground floor and a window above. The flanking bays have a window at ground floor and above. The majority of the windows and the door contain segmental arches. The ground floor window on the left hand side has lost its arch.

The east facing elevation is a gable end with chimney above. There is a second chimney in the back lean-to, alongside which is a small window. This wall is predominantly rubble stone, with some brick additions. The line of the roof is continuous.

The rear elevation contains a door and windows.

The west elevation contains a gable end with chimney.

The front door opens up into a long room, running the length of the building. Formerly this would have been into a passageway but the walls forming this have been partially removed. There are fireplaces surviving at each end, these look like 19<sup>th</sup> century features. At the end of the former passage there was a stairwell to the first floor and one to a cellar that extends under the eastern part of the house. A door to the right of the stairwells leads into the back lean-to area. Here there is a chamfered beam on show, which could date from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The first floor and attic were not inspected.

The terracing around the house is of a probable 19<sup>th</sup> century origin with 20<sup>th</sup> century alterations.

### 4.3 Reliability of Results and Techniques

The work was conducted in hot, dry and sunny conditions, making the reliability of the results good.

## 5 FINDS

### 5.1 Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

The pottery assemblage comprised 8 sherds with a total weight of 195g. It was recorded utilizing the coding system and chronology of the Oxfordshire County type-series (Mellor 1984; 1994), as follows:

**OXAM: Brill/Boarstall ware**, AD1200 – 1600. 3 sherds, 114g.

**WHEW: Mass-produced white earthenwares**, 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> C. 5 sherds, 81g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*. The range of fabric types is typical of sites in the region. The sherds are all in good condition, and appear reliably stratified. One of the OXAM sherds, from 1/8, is from the rim and handle of a jug, a typical product of the tradition.

*Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type*

| F | Cntxt | OXAM |     | WHEW |    | Date  |
|---|-------|------|-----|------|----|-------|
|   |       | No   | Wt  | No   | Wt |       |
| 1 | 1     | 1    | 14  |      |    | 13thC |
| 1 | 7     |      |     | 1    | 60 | 19thC |
| 1 | 8     | 2    | 100 |      |    | 13thC |
| 2 | 4     |      |     | 4    | 21 | 19thC |
|   | Total | 3    | 114 | 5    | 81 |       |

## 5.2 Ceramic Building Material by Gavin Davis

Seven fragments of peg tile were recovered from context (1/07) with a combined weight of 923g. There were two fabric types ranging in colour from light orange, three fragments, to light pinkish red, four fragments. The orange fragments displayed a rare amount of inclusion and one fragment showed some oxidisation at the core. Two of the pinkish red fragments had oxidised cores. One peg tile fragment was recovered from (1/08). It weighed 124g and was similar in appearance to the pinkish red fabrics from context (1/08). All the tile fragments were identified as broadly post medieval in date. None of the material was considered for retention.

## 5.3 Animal Bone by Gavin Davis

Animal bone was recovered from two contexts. Context (1/07) contained 4 fragments of animal bone with a combined weight 292g. The fragments included one piece from the superior end of a humerus and one from the inferior end. There was also a fragment of femur and a fragment from part of the pelvis. Four fragments of animal bone were recovered from context (1/08) with a combined weight of 29g. There was one complete phalange, one carpal bone plus one carpal fragment, and one unidentified bone fragment. None of the bone displayed any butchery marks and they were not considered for retention.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The investigation has revealed only sparse amounts of archaeological features relating to the medieval settlement of Easington. The possible well and limestone footing found in trench one seem to be the only indicators of the late medieval period and it could be that terracing of the landscape and the present building have already removed some archaeological remains within the application area. The footing may relate to the known medieval rectory. The pathway in trench two clearly relates to the present 19<sup>th</sup> century building and the large rubbish pit is undoubtedly very modern. No archaeological features from any other time period were discovered.

## 7 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mellor, M, 1994 *Oxford Pottery: A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region Oxoniensia* **59**, 17-217

**APPENDIX – ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

| <b>ID</b>       | <b>Type</b> | <b>Description</b>         | <b>Depth</b> | <b>Width</b> | <b>Length</b> | <b>Finds</b> | <b>Interpretation</b> | <b>Date</b> |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Trench 1</b> |             |                            |              |              |               |              |                       |             |
| 1/01            | Layer       | Topsoil                    | 0.48m        | 1.60m        | 15.0m         |              | Garden Soil           | Modern      |
| 1/02            | Layer       | Natural Gault Clay         |              | 1.60m        | 15.0m         |              | Natural               |             |
| 1/03            | Cut         | Foundation cut             | 0.23m        | 0.40m        | 0.40m         |              | Foundation cut        |             |
| 1/04            | Structure   | Limestone blocks           | 0.23m        | 0.40m        | 0.40m         |              | Wall footings         |             |
| 1/05            | Deposit     | Course sub rounded pebbles | 0.08m        | 1.00m        | 1.60m         |              | Path/Aggregate dump   |             |
| 1/06            | Cut         | Sub-oval pit               | 0.98m        | 1.60m        | 3.60m         |              | Pit/Well              |             |
| 1/07            | Fill        | Compact, grey sandy clay   | 0.30m        | 1.60m        | 3.60m         |              | Upper fill            |             |
| 1/08            | Fill        | Compact, grey clay         | 0.98m+       | 1.57m        | 1.57m         |              | Lower fill            |             |

| <b>ID</b>       | <b>Type</b> | <b>Description</b>                         | <b>Depth</b> | <b>Width</b> | <b>Length</b> | <b>Finds</b>   | <b>Interpretation</b>      | <b>Date</b> |
|-----------------|-------------|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Trench 2</b> |             |  |              |              |               |                |                            |             |
| 2/01            | Layer       | Topsoil                                    | 0.40m        | 1.60m        | 15.0m         |                | Garden soil                | Modern      |
| 2/02            | Layer       | Natural                                    |              | 1.60m        | 15.0m         |                | Natural Geology            |             |
| 2/03            | Layer       | Masonry limestone blocks without bonding   | 0.02m        | 1.10m        | 1.60m         |                | Pathway                    |             |
| 2/04            | Fill        | Friable, dark grey sandy silt. 2% charcoal | 0.10m        | 1.10m        | 1.60m         | Pottery. Glass | Fill of pathway depression |             |
| 2/05            | Cut         | Steep sided, flat bottomed                 | 0.10m        | 1.10m        | 1.60m         |                | Foundation cut for pathway |             |
| 2/06            | Fill        | Compact mixed sand, silt and clay          | 1.00m        | 2.10m        | 1.60m         |                | Domestic refuse            |             |
| 2/07            | Cut         | Moderate sloping sides and concave base    | 1.00m        | 2.10m        | 1.60m         |                | Domestic refuse pit        |             |